

Application No.: 10/612,631
Amdt dated: December 18, 2006
Reply to Office action of October 19, 2006

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-25 (Canceled)

26. (Currently amended) A securing mechanism for securing a pair of free ends of a suture, comprising:

a first interlocking member having:

a base,

a protrusion extending from a periphery of the base,

a standing portion extending from the base adjacent to the protrusion, the protrusion being substantially smaller than the standing portion,

a mating window disposed through the base adjacent to the standing portion, and

a mating hole disposed through the base adjacent to the first mating window, the mating hole being substantially smaller than the first mating window; and

a second interlocking member operably connecting with the first interlocking member, the second interlocking member having:

at least one protrusion and at least one mating hole, and

a standing portion and a mating window.

27. (Currently amended) A securing mechanism of claim 26 wherein the standing portion of the first interlocking member having has a free end away from an

end fixed to the base of the first interlocking member, the free end having two substantially straight portions extending substantially perpendicular to the base of the first interlocking member with a substantially curved portion connecting the two generally straight portions together.

28. (Previously presented) A securing mechanism for securing a pair of free ends of a suture, comprising:

- a first interlocking member having:

- a base with a length, a width, a first half and a second half, the width being equal or smaller than the length,

- a first protrusion extending from the first half of the base,

- a standing portion extending widthwise from the first half of the base adjacent to the first protrusion,

- a mating window disposed through the second half of the base adjacent to the standing portion and extending widthwise on the second half of the base, and

- a mating hole disposed through the second half of the base adjacent to the mating window, the mating hole being substantially smaller than the mating window; and

- a second interlocking member having:

- a protrusion operably connecting with the mating hole of the first interlocking member,

- a mating hole operably connecting with the first protrusion of the first interlocking member,

- a standing portion operably connecting with the mating window of the first interlocking member, and

- a mating window operably connecting with the standing portion of the first interlocking member.

29. (Previously presented) The securing mechanism of claim 28 wherein the standing portion of the first interlocking member has a width and a length, the width being equal to or greater than the length and the length of the standing portion of the first interlocking member being less than the length of the base of the first interlocking member.

30. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 26, wherein the protrusions are cylindrical and are sized and configured to match opposing mating holes.

31. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 26, wherein the protrusions further comprise barbs or have increased end diameters to engage opposing mating holes in a fixed relationship when fully mated.

32. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 26, wherein the standing portions and mating windows are sized and configured to engage and confine the suture ends.

33. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 26, wherein the assembly of the interlocking members may be advanced, retracted or adjusted along the length of the suture.

34. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 26, wherein the standing portions further comprise locking or latching features.

35. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 34, wherein the mating windows further comprise receiving portions to mate with the locking features of the standing portions.

36. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 31, wherein the barbs or increased end diameters are in a non-contacting relationship with the suture.

37. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 34 wherein the locking or latching features of the standing portions are in a non-contacting relationship with the suture.

38. (New) The securing mechanism of claim 26 wherein the standing portions of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member are extendable through the mating window of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member and foldable onto an exterior surface of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member away from the suture.

39. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 28, wherein the protrusions are cylindrical and are sized and configured to match opposing mating holes.

40. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 28, wherein the protrusions further comprise barbs or have increased end diameters to engage opposing mating holes in a fixed relationship when fully mated.

41. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 28, wherein the standing portions and mating windows are sized and configured to engage and confine the suture ends.

42. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 28, wherein the assembly of the interlocking members may be advanced, retracted or adjusted along the length of the suture.

43. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 28, wherein the standing portions further comprise locking or latching features.

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44. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 43, wherein the mating windows further comprise receiving portions to mate with the locking features of the standing portions.

45. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 40, wherein the barbs or increased end diameters are in a non-contacting relationship with the suture.

46. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 43 wherein the locking or latching features of the standing portions are in a non-contacting relationship with the suture.

47. (New) The securing mechanism of claim 28 wherein the standing portions of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member are extendable through the mating window of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member and foldable onto an exterior surface of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member away from the suture.